

VZCZCXRO4679

RR RUEHGI RUEHRN RUEHROV

DE RUEHKM #0448 0730546

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 140546Z MAR 07

FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8418

INFO RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0553

RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE

RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0388

RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 3195

UNCLAS KAMPALA 000448

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREF PREL MOPS UG SU

SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: LRA LEADER JOSEPH KONY AGREES TO RESUME TALKS

¶1. Summary: Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda described the discussions between Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony and United Nations Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joaquim Chissano on March 11 as "positive and constructive." Rugunda said that he anticipated another meeting between Kony, the GOU, and Government of South Sudan within two weeks to work through the LRA's concerns about the Juba venue. Rugunda stated that the LRA did not demand a change in venue, but that its complaints about the mediation secretariat were technical and administrative in nature and could be remedied. The date for the resumption of formal talks at Juba would be determined after the meeting in two weeks. End Summary.

¶2. The Government of Uganda's lead negotiator, Ruhakana Rugunda, was pleased with the meeting between United Nations Special Envoy for the LRA-Affected Areas Joaquim Chissano and LRA leaders on March 11. The meeting focused on the resumption of the talks. The LRA delegation presented 18 demands, most focused on the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) mediation. Rugunda and the other stakeholders present, including representatives of the Acholi Parliamentary Group, elected and appointed local officials from Acholiland, the Parliamentary opposition leader, and religious and traditional leaders were assured that the LRA would resume the negotiations. Chissano also brought with him a representative of the Government of Democratic Republic of Congo, Ambassador Kapanga, Mozambique's Minister for Presidential Affairs Francisco Madeira, and South African General Gilbert Romano, representing President Mbeki, to impress upon Kony the interest of other countries in the resolution of the conflict.

¶3. The LRA side was led by Kony, Vincent Otti, and fellow International Criminal Court-indictee Dominic Ongwen, and included other key military commanders, such as Ceasar Acellum, who had recently crossed the Nile River. The LRA's Juba delegation also participated. The LRA's demands focused on their security, accommodations, per diem, and treatment at Juba. Gulu District Chairman Mao told us he was surprised that the LRA had only one demand that pertained to Uganda, the withdrawal of the Ugandan military from southern Sudan and replacement with 1,000 UN peacekeepers.

¶4. According to Rugunda, the LRA agreed to resume the talks after their concerns are hammered out at another preliminary meeting. The talks would likely resume at Juba, as the GOSS mediation team is being beefed up with observers from Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and the DRC. The LRA's other administrative concerns were focused on improving the Juba venue. The GOU would respond to the LRA's demands after receiving them in writing. In the meantime, Rugunda said he would maintain telephone contact with Kony and Otti.

¶5. Comment: The GOU praised Chissano for his efforts to get the talks back on track, which included shuttle diplomacy between Khartoum, Juba, Garamba National Park, and Kampala. The meeting was

significant because it was the first time a minister of Rugunda's stature met face-to-face with Kony. Those present said the highlight was a handshake between Rugunda and Kony. Rugunda said the gesture reaffirmed his confidence that a peace deal could be attained.

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